

To Share or Not to Share

By Josh Naramore

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION AND CULTURAL CHANGE as the sharing economy continues to grow are forcing parking operators to adapt. New services are challenging local government regulatory approaches, making it difficult to differentiate between public and private, personal and business, and creating a chaotic, but positive, disruption.

Transportation is the second-highest household expense after housing. Having limited mobility options affects residents and employees, restricting the economy and quality of life. Transportation and mobility need to adapt to more rapidly advance improvements to transit, biking, walking, and increased mobility options.

Shared-use mobility services include public transit, bike- and car-sharing, taxis, ride-sharing (carpool and van-pool), and ride-sourcing (Lyft and Uber). Combined in a community, these services create a comprehensive mobility system to meet equitable transportation challenges. They provide greater mobility choices, reduced transportation costs, and choices to individuals who cannot afford to purchase and maintain a vehicle. When it functions well, transit can be an important tool for equity. Key is actively bringing transit agencies, private mobility companies, and communities together to ensure that equity considerations are included within all forms of mobility. Car-sharing is a key component of the sharing economy and should be carefully considered by local governments, institutional partners, and the private sector.

What Is Car-Share?

Car-sharing offers access to a vehicle or fleet of vehicles for short-term use and is priced by the hour or minute,

located throughout the community, and offers a bundled rate to cover most if not all costs. The two primary types of car-sharing are point-to-point model (trips can start and end in different locations) and the reserved-space model (trips start and end in the same location). It provides many of the benefits of a personal vehicle, but without the costs of ownership. There also has been a rise in peer-to-peer car-sharing programs that allow individuals to share underutilized personal vehicles.

Car sharing expands mobility options, leading to reduced household car ownership rates and vehicle miles traveled. It also facilitates more careful consideration of the necessity, duration, and distance of car trips and can boost transit use, bike trips, and walking.

Reduced parking demand requires less space to park cars at employer sites, residential locations, and transit stations. The construction of new structured parking can be delayed or mitigated and parking costs for residents can fall.

There are also clear environmental benefits. Car-sharing reduces car ownership and vehicle miles traveled while increasing walking, biking, and connections to public transit, contributing to reduced greenhouse gases and particulate emissions. Many car-share companies are trying to deploy electric fleets, also lowering emissions.

Resources

The Shared-Use Mobility Center (sharedusemobilitycenter.org) is a nonprofit providing research and pilot projects to support innovation and collaboration in new mobility. It offers toolkits, research on best practices, and a network of programs.

For car-sharing to be a realistic transportation option, it needs to reach a wide geographic area and a broad range of residents and users. Cities may need to consider a distribution requirement to ensure companies locate vehicles in all areas and those most in need, including households with limited access to transportation and low rates of car ownership. Cities can partner with companies to ensure that program costs are within reach of most individuals.

Improving access across jurisdictional boundaries where most transit services do not cross can help provide greater access to jobs. On- and off-street parking policies also need to be examined. Depending on the different types of car-share operations, cities need to adopt policies to standardize signage and the types of permitting or licensing to allow operators to ensure available parking. Parking and charging station availability provide opportunities for private businesses and parking operators wanting to offer car-share. [P](#)



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